

Vendor Teleconference April 23rd at 9:00 a.m. Meeting Notes

The agenda was:

- Vendors were invited to talk about their experience with the changes to the new food list and minimum stock requirements, including challenges they had to overcome, their perspectives on the changes and on how/where improvements can be made.
- The new exemption process was discussed.
- State WIC Office staff provided clarification where it was needed.
- Vendors were invited to contact Elaine Rich at (907) 465-4704 or via email at elaine.rich@alaska.gov no later than April 22nd to have additional questions addressed during the meeting.

Many vendors have the client sign the warrant and then ring the items up. This is an issue because if the client is told that one of their items is incorrect they end up taking a reduced quantity. WIC Policy is to have the client sign the warrant after writing in the purchase amount.

The statement in the March 2010 newsletter that says that Kraft is the only brand of American cheese allowed is incorrect. The WIC policy on cheese is that we do not endorse specific brands of cheese. One brand of 100% American cheese (not cheese product, food or spread) that we have been able to find in stores is Kraft Deli Deluxe. Our current policy is that clients must purchase the least expensive eligible brand. It is possible that another brand of 100% American cheese is available and lower priced.

Vendors should not sell UHT to clients with fresh milk warrants or they may have warrants that go over the NTE limit. Instead, vendors should refer clients to their local agency to change their warrants.

Vendors are required to sell the least expensive and largest size milk available. For example, when there is no stock of the least expensive brand of gallons of 2% fresh milk, vendors may sell the next least expensive brand of gallons of 2% fresh milk. Vendors should not sell half gallons if they have gallons available or they may have warrants that go over the NTE limit.

The statement in the March 2010 newsletter that says that WIC does not allow the sale of hot cereals under 11.5 oz is incorrect. The minimum package size for hot cereal is 11.8 oz.

Some vendors have reported having issues getting lactose free fresh milk in quart sizes. The State WIC Office sent an e-mail to Alaskan distributors to inquire if they stock this product and J.B. Gottstein stated that they do stock it. Vendors may contact Jake Hale at J.B. Gottstein at (907) 561-1944 if they have questions.

Vendors must allow clients to purchase buttermilk with a fresh milk warrant that states fat free, 1%, or 2%. Buttermilk cannot be purchased with any other warrant type. Some vendors expressed that they had issues with warrants going over the NTE limit with buttermilk. The State WIC staff announced that they are hiring a contractor to evaluate their vendor management processes and would make sure that they examined the buttermilk issue.

Some vendors stated that they have had problems with clients trying to purchase the wrong foods. There are several ways to address this issue:

- 1) Vendors could use the WIC approved shelf tags to indicate which items are allowable.
- 2) Vendors could try to educate the client by showing them the food list.
- 3) Vendors could complete a retraining form or refer a client back to the clinic for education on WIC policies and procedures.

Food List Transition Period: We will allow clients to use the 10/1/2009 food list or the 4/1/2010 Food list through 6/30/10, at which time the 4/1/10 list will be used exclusively.

The new exemption process was reviewed.

- Vendors may only request exemptions for the two reasons stated on the form: limited number of clients using these foods at present or “sell by/use by” date limitations.
- Infant food items are a group. Exemptions will not be granted for one food item in the group such as infant meats. Vendors must stock all four infant food items or none of them.
- Vendors must send the exemption form to the Local WIC Agency (not the State WIC Office)
- Vendors will be required to make exempted items available at their store within 10 days so stating that your distributor does not stock an item is not a valid reason for exemption.

Reminder vendor price sheets are due one week from today on April 30th!

Vendors were reminded that they could contact the State WIC Vendor Management Staff at (907) 465-3100 at any time if they had questions or concerns.